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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Nation's Report Card: R.I. above national average for first time Reading scores up in grades 4, 8; math scores up in grade 8**

For the first time in the history of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also called “The Nation’s Report Card,” Rhode Island students scored above the national average in all four assessments in mathematics and reading, based on the percentage of students who performed at or above the proficient level.

The results that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), of the U.S. Department of Education, released today (November 7) show that Rhode Island stands one percentage point above the national average in grade-4 mathematics, 4 points above the national average in grade-4 reading, and 2 points above the national average for both mathematics and reading in grade 8.

Four years ago, Rhode Island students lagged significantly behind the nation as a whole in grade 8. Over the past four years, Rhode Island grade-8 students have far outpaced the nation as a whole in improvements in both mathematics and reading and now stand above the national average in both subject areas. Rhode Island grade-4 students have matched the national pace in both mathematics and reading and have remained above the national average in both subject areas.

Here are the results, showing the change in percent proficient or better since 2009 and the difference between percent proficient in Rhode Island and the percent proficient in the nation as a whole:

	Percent of students proficient or better		
	2009	2013	change - % proficient
Mathematics			
Grade 4			
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>+3 points since 2009</b>
U.S.	38	41	+3
	<b>R.I. = +1</b>	<b>R.I. = +1 (points above U.S.)</b>	

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Grade 8			
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>+8</b>
U.S.	33	34	+1
	<b>R.I. = -5</b>	<b>R.I. = +2</b>	
Reading			
Grade 4			
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>+2</b>
U.S.	32	34	+2
	<b>R.I. = +4</b>	<b>R.I. = +4</b>	
Grade 8			
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>+8</b>
U.S.	30	34	+4
	<b>R.I. = -2</b>	<b>R.I. = +2</b>	

“Congratulations to Rhode Island students, teachers, and families on achieving these successful results on The Nation’s Report Card,” said Governor Lincoln D. Chafee. “Not only has Rhode Island moved above the national average in grades 4 and 8, but we continue to make significant progress in all subject areas. I am pleased that our investments in public education are leading to positive results.”

“The results that the U.S. Department of Education released today are further evidence that our students and our system of public education are moving forward on the right track,” said Eva-Marie Mancuso, Chair of the Board of Education. “We need to continue improving student achievement and we need to reduce our significant achievement gaps, but today’s results show that Rhode Island is poised to be one of the leading states in the nation – not only when it comes to education policy, but also in terms of student results. I congratulate all Rhode Island educators and students on their success.”

“I am very pleased to see this evidence of our steady progress over the past four years,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “Our goal is to prepare all Rhode Island students for success, and, thanks to our dedicated teachers, students, and families, we are taking major strides toward achieving that goal. To continue moving forward as a state, we will focus on closing achievement gaps and on making our schools America’s best.”

The NCES administers the NAEP assessments in mathematics and reading every two years to students in grades 4 and 8. Results are reported at the national and state levels only – not at the district, school, or individual-student level.

On the 2013 NAEP assessments, Rhode Island students advanced by 3 percentage points since the previous NAEP assessment (2011) in reading in both grades 4 and 8. Rhode Island grade-8 students advanced by 2 percentage points in mathematics since 2011. Since 2011, Rhode Island grade-4 students declined by 1 percentage point in mathematics, but they still stand 1 percentage point above the national average.

Here is a breakout of Rhode Island improvements on NAEP scores over the past four years:

	Percent Proficient or Better			4-year growth
	2009	2011	2013	
Mathematics				
Grade 4	39	43	42	+3 percentage points
Grade 8	28	34	36	+8
Reading				
Grade 4	36	35	38	+2
Grade 8	28	33	36	+8

Rhode Island has seen similar improvements over the past four years on the statewide assessments, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP).

As in 2009, Rhode Island remains the lowest-scoring state in New England (which is by far the highest-performing region in the country) on three of the four assessments (and 1 percentage point ahead of Maine in grade-4 reading). Over the past four years, however, the gap between Rhode Island and the next New England state (either Connecticut or Maine) has narrowed - moving from 6 or 7 percentage points (depending on grade and subject) to only 3 points in grade-4 mathematics, 2 points in grade-8 reading, and 1 point in grade-8 mathematics.

The NCES provides this definition of “proficient”:

Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Despite the positive results for the state as a whole, significant achievement gaps remain in place among Rhode Island students. Although Black students, Hispanic students, and economically disadvantaged students have improved significantly over the past four years, particularly in mathematics, their performance on almost all assessments remains approximately 20 percentage points below the state average, based on percent proficient or better. Over the past four years, the performance of students with disabilities and of English Learners has either declined or improved at a much lower rate than the state average.

Gaps between Hispanic and white students, however, have narrowed over time in grade-4 mathematics and in grade-8 reading. In 2009, Rhode Island Hispanic students were the lowest-scoring in the country on three of the four assessments. Today, Rhode Island Hispanic students no longer rank last on any assessment, but they rank next-to-last on one assessment (grade-8 reading) and 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> from last on the other three assessments.

The R.I. Department of Education offers two cautions regarding interpreting NAEP data.

First, some of the improvements over the short term are relatively small and are deemed “not statistically significant.” Rhode Island 2013 scores are considered “not significantly different” from the national average except in grade-4 reading, where the scores are significantly higher than the national average. Rhode Island 2013 scores are also considered “not significantly different” from the 2011 scores, although the grade-8 scores are significantly higher than the 2009 scores in both mathematics and reading.

Second, as measured by scale score (which ranges from 0 to 500 points), Rhode Island students are at (rather than above) the national average in mathematics, 2 points above the national average in grade-4 reading, and 1 point above the national average in grade-8 reading.

A selected sample of about 12,000 4<sup>th</sup>-grade and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students from across Rhode Island took the NAEP mathematics and reading assessments from January through March earlier this year.

The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) will post further information on the Rhode Island NAEP scores on the RIDE website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InstructionAssessment/Assessment/NationalAssessmentofEducationalProgressNAEP.aspx>

The NCES has posted information about the 2013 NAEP mathematics and reading results on its site:

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>

*Note: Commissioner Gist will be available to speak with the media today (November 7) at 10:30 a.m. and at noon, at the RIDE offices, 255 Westminster St./80 Washington St., Providence.*

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